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### METHODOLOGY OF CAPITALIZING FAIRY-TALES IN THE PRESCHOOL CYCLE

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#### *Abstract*

Story-telling is one of the most popular children's language education activities because it satisfies the need for knowledge and affection, stimulates their creativity, their tendency to miraculous, fantastic, imaginary and constitutes the optimal framework for exercising their communication capabilities. Starting from a simple fact (a story, a character), children create with great pleasure, combining the real with the imagination. in their stories, children have a predilection for dialogues that animate, in their charming language, the narratives. The words of the stories express the affective feelings of the children, creating a miraculous world. By telling a well-known fairy tale, preserving the motifs of the original story, children can change the content in an original way, enriching it with personal elements. The story is integrated in most of the kindergarten activities, regardless of the issues covered. It becomes a dominant activity for language education, education for society and environmental education. They carefully follow the plot of the fairy-tale, memorize, discover features and behaviours of the characters, analyse and compare, establish certain relationships between facts and characters, reach generalizations. Thus, the child's thinking is vividly stimulated he understands the meaning of the hero's deeds. Besides giving the child the opportunity to learn to understand people's thoughts and feelings, the stories, using the word and artistic image, familiarize him with the structure of the language, the richness of his grammatical forms, the beauty and the expressiveness of language and thus contribute to the development of his speech and his thinking.

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## 1. Introduction

Story-telling is one the most used activities with pre-schoolers. This can be defined as an oral exposition under the form of a narration or a written text through which facts, events and occurrences remote in space and time, nature phenomena, geographical scenes etc. whom children cannot meet otherwise (Nicola, 1996). As far back as ancient times, Aristotle recommends the adult's stories in education and instruction as important means, appropriate for early childhood, as they are not wearisome and children consider them pleasant.

Story-telling is integrated in most activities developed in the kindergarten, regardless the area of the topics to be taught. It becomes a dominant activity for language education activities, education for society or nature and environmental education. These activities can be organized with the whole group, as a compulsory activity or during play and the chosen activities with the whole group or in small groups.

## 2. Problem Statement

### 2.1. Place and role of fairy-tales in preschool children education

In the kindergarten, the story-telling activity develops in two forms:

1. Teacher's stories;
2. Children's stories (retellings and created stories).

Story-telling is one of the most attractive language education activities, as it satisfies their need of knowledge and affectivity, stimulates their creativity, the tendency towards the miraculous, fantastic, imaginary and supplies the optimal background for the exercise of communication capacities.

Starting from a simple fact (an event, a character), children create with great enjoyment, combining the real and the imaginary world. In their stories, children have a preference for the dialogues which animate the account. Words used in their stories express children's inner feelings, creating a miraculous world (Păișă-Lăzărescu, Tudor, & Surdu, 2006).

The story or the fairy-tale implies an ample epic evolution, having several sequences, representative episodes which can be associated with drawn images or book illustrations. Images represent thorough iconic texts the child learn to read creatively. Decoding the contents is not restricted to describing images but it can become an authentic verbal creation.

The materiality is rendered through cherished or blamed characters by children, according to the way they perceive ethics, in the good or the bad. Characters' deeds are spectacular, having a moralizing role through the antithesis between the good and the bad. Children participate affectively, verbally or non-verbally, encourage or blame characters and take sides.

The story-telling activity has informative and formative values. Children assimilate diverse information, but at the same time, tales satisfy their need for knowledge and affectivity, stimulate their creativity and form the optimal background for the exercise of communication capacities. As a specific activity in the preschool cycle, story-telling develops the following psychical processes:

- **language** – as a fundamental means of reception and interpretation;
- **logical thinking** – due to the sequencing of the events in the tales content;
- **imagination** - through the creation of new images based on adapting the previous representations and cognitive experiences;

- **voluntary memory** - through retaining the development of events and their exposition based on specific means and procedures (teacher's questions, illustrations and drawings);
- **attention**- through memorizing names of characters, certain elements of fairy-tales, the sequence of events, of representative phrases or lines.

Fairy-tales have a very important role in language education. Besides offering the child the possibility to learn how to understand people's thoughts and feelings, tales familiarize the child with language structure, with the richness of grammatical forms and the beauty and eloquence of language, contributing to the development of his language and thinking.

By listening tales, children learn new words and phrases which enter their linguistic competence. They memorize the beginning and the ending words of fairy-tales, recurrent phrases and thus, cultivated and popular language with their specific terms enter children's actual language.

Stories and fairy-tales have both a formative and ethic value, contributing to the formation of moral conscience, of positive traits of will and character; children chose life models, experience manifestations and images of the good and the bad (in: The Purse with Two Coins, The Goat with Three Kids, The Bear Fooled by the Fox, etc.).

„With no doubt, however simple and easy they could seem, fairy-tales arise in children the wish to be similar to the good ones, who ends to be happy and at the same time the inner fear towards the great misfortunes that will happen if they follow the bad ones...These pure and unexperienced hearts receive the moral hidden in the tale's clothing with unbelievable avidity.... ” (Stanciu, 1958, p.43-44).

To create means: to cause something to exist, to bring to life, to cause, to generate, to produce, to be the first who interprets the role and sketches a character, to compose quickly, to conceive etc. A creative person is characterized by originality and expressiveness, is imaginative, generational, inventive, a path breaker etc.

### 3. Research Questions

According to the stipulations of the new Curriculum, teachers should take into account the following methodical suggestions:

For the nursery group tales have to be short, with few episodes, with accessible language, attractive, to develop positive feelings and inner emotional experiences; characters have to attractive, known by children (mainly from the animal world), simple in structure.

For pre-school group, one can use tales with more numerous episodes which can familiarize children with different life aspects and influence their feelings and behaviour.

For the kindergarten group tales become more complex, with representative characters for a certain moral category, the real and imaginary level fuse to a larger extent.

Story-telling activities are also means of aesthetic education, being an example of elegant language that influence strongly children's speech and their behaviour. Aesthetical value of tales becomes more considerable as it reflects more the moral beauty of human beings and show children a concrete and precise ideal to strive after. They learn that it is valuable to be polite, honest, courageous or hard-working-like the character in the tale. The role and importance of fairy-tales lie in its cognitive, ethic and aesthetic value, in the influence they exercise upon the child's personality.

In this regard, this study aims to find answers regarding:

Characteristics of the fairy-tales which can be used in preschool, for each learning level according to methodological suggestions of the preschool curriculum

Ways to capitalizing the fairy-tales in terms of developing creative elements of pre-schoolers personalities

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to analyse the role of the fairy-tale in developing the pre-schooler's creativity. Should be considered the 3 dimensions of creativity – fluidity, flexibility, originality.

Fluidity represents the capacity of being adaptable to different circumstances

Flexibility represents the capacity of being adaptive

Originality represents the capacity of bringing something new

#### **5. Research Methods**

To identify the aimed objectives, it was used the analyse of the pre-schooler's learning products as well as observing their school behaviour.

#### **6. Findings**

Pre-schoolers train and fascinate us through their charm and sweetness, through sincerity, candour, innocence, perspicacity and creativity. Early childhood is appreciated mostly as the age which includes the most important educational experience of a person's life. Most pregnant rhythms and one the most significant acquisitions with obvious results in the subsequent developmental stages are registered in the development of human individuality. That is why we cannot disregard one of the essential dimension in the development and affirmation of personality-creativity.

The concept of creativity has some particulars with the preschool child. The current meaning of creativity at children does not manifest as a finalized act in products of great originality, but it refers to potential, factors or predictive attitudinal capacities for later performances, to the child's capacity to act by himself, independently, both on a mental and practical level.

The child's receptiveness and curiosity, the richness of imagination, his spontaneous tendency towards the new, the passion for fable, his wish to achieve something creative can be effectively nurtured and fulfilled, can be improved through adequate requirements and practice which can offer multiple positive elements in stimulating the creative potential at preschool age.

We have to stop deliberately to what a tale means in the pre-schooler's life – the fairy-tale is a special modality to experience the world, a means of communication, and a good instruction method. It contains the fundamental truths of life. Fairy-tales go beyond space and time, being the first spiritual feed which teach him to appreciate; a well-told tale can amuse, demonstrate and disarm. Tales develop communication skills, enrich the vocabulary, cultivate beautiful feelings, stimulate imagination and creativity, educate the spirit of sacrifice, altruism, solidarity, justice; lay the foundation of the world outlook.

Presently, reading has powerful rivals which deceive children most of all. Television, the computer, the internet has quickly become companions of every generation of the last years. These three

means of high-speed and convenient information that offer children a complete menu of knowledge already cover an important part of their less and less free time. Then, the question arises whether the book remains: a promise, a joy, a journey through souls, thoughts and loveliness as Romanian writer Tudor Arghezi posits.

For that matter, parents and especially kindergarten have to rehabilitate reading.

Needless to say that the taste for reading is formed early that is why in the kindergarten the sketchy information related to the environment or to history are delivered through storiettes. These make a transition from the mythical world of tales to the real world, clarified and explained also through epos.

Kindergarten is one of the most decisive factors in educating children through the beautiful for worth. Entering the world of fairy-tales, children will learn to tell the good from the evil, truth from lie, good deeds from the bad ones; they will become more attentive, more sensitive, beginning to form moral concepts. It is recommended that pre-schoolers should make friends with books in order to develop perception in selecting values.

Language education in kindergarten comprises two types of story-telling: teacher's story-telling and children's story-telling: retellings and stories created by children.

Through story-telling the child escapes his egocentrism as he identifies on an imaginary level with the characters in which he finds interchangeable features with himself. As the text is retold (by someone in the family or by the teacher) actions, characters and verbal material settle out.

For the pre-schooler, the adult who reads the tale is also the author, the witness of the events, the magician who opens the door of an unknown world, an actor and especially a speaking and story-telling model. Listening to tales allows children to become familiar with the structure of the folk tale and with a series of imaginative proceedings like: amplification (*Flămâncilă, Gerilă, The Dragon*), multiplication (*The Goat with Three Kids, Punguța cu doi bani*). The discovery of meanings, title formulation amplifies fluidity and flexibility (Stoica & Vasilescu, 1953).

Free re-telling is characterized by a greater freedom of children's imagination. They retell stories according to the preference and to affective perception. If the adult attitude is permissive, the child introduces new characters (for the most part met in other tales), modifies the events, enriches the plot, proposes prevention for certain unpleasant situations. However, a logical sequence of re-told events and a correct, nuanced verbalization is necessary.

Stories created by children have an obvious formative value, contributing to the development of thinking and creative imagination, of a correct, fluent and eloquent language. The most frequent types of created stories are created stories based on a series of illustrations and stories with a given beginning. The topic of the tales created by children after teacher's model can be related to everyday events, facts, moments experienced by children, by their family or by friends; incidents from the animal world.

Children have to imagine places, events, facts which happened or may happen just as in the real world in future, cartoons or in dreams. The child is independent in his speech, he manifests his initiative, spontaneity and unexhausted imagination freely. The creative attitude he has towards language depends on the nature of message he sends and on his intellectual, linguistic and affective skills. His tales are short, without ramblings, without long explanations, somehow incorrect, but sometimes they can bear a special charm.

There are such situations when, through the created tales, he projects his own wishes, preferences and problems upon characters. He will be stimulated to introduce new characters, to link and complicate,

to organize the verbal discourse logically, to introduce characters from different tales in the same tale, to move away from the known tale by combining or transforming these. Verbal bridges, questions and rhetorical exclamations of the teacher as an answer to the child's questions, verbal and nonverbal stimulations, active listening, the appreciation of unusual formulations and solutions are meant to fuel the creative act. Any interruption will block the series of verbal and image combinations and recombination.

The story based on a series of images has a special place among the modalities of manifesting the creative spirit. Decoding the contents is not restricted to describing images but it can become an authentic verbal creation. After decoding, children can ask questions, can formulate its title, can complete one another. The teacher has to stimulate creativity and to encourage children's originality.

Forms and modalities used in the acquirement of instructive-educational values of fairy-tale in the preschool cycle

Since early ages, a dependency relation installs between the child and literature as a result of its formative value. Children's literature is an art of words which exercises its educational function through literary language and artistic pattern of the material but also through the force of literature to create a universe, a parallel existence to the real world and its reflection.

In the present-day modern educational system, based on scientific and new concepts, the instructive-educational process represents a main factor in achieving psycho-pedagogical values. Children acquire a scientific knowledge system, gain certain abilities and skills, get down to the development of the understanding capacity, to the forming of a world outlook, receive ideas about moral behaviour and capacities of knowledge and creation.

Narrating or inventing, we dream about our childhood, replacing to the child listener the primary dream of the fantasy tale. The fairy-tale has to be relived as a dream of eternity. During story-telling, children manifest differently, according to age characteristics, in point of concentration and attention maintenance and also in relation to the transition in the miraculous world of fairy-tales.

In order to help children, the teacher will create a warm, strong, affectionate atmosphere. She will project herself in the atmosphere of fairy-tales, she will use an appropriate tone in the development of moments describing the unforeseen events experienced by the hero.

Exposition of the fairy-tale content will be done using a set of means which underline the meaning of words, sentences and clauses. To this end, and also to underline certain emotional states, she will use an adequate tone, bringing more emphasis and increasing the emotional state of the listeners. In order to ensure a maximum reception of the text by children, one can use a set of intuitive means such as illustrations, filmstrips, scale models which show the main moments of fairy-tales.

Conversation related to the topic, the content and the main characters of the fairy-tale, re-enactment of the significant scenes of the tale as well as the mimicry of certain actions of characters are some procedures for imprinting and re-enforcing the plot of the fairy-tale.

By means of retellings, children memorize the plot of the fairy-tale easily, acquire its moral hidden under fabulous events. The conscious acquisition of fairy-tales is done by repeating them in common activities and through the exposition of illustrations in the classroom which externalize their content by means of an interrogative verbal plan.

Audition represents a valuable communication modality for its positive formative effect having powerful responses at the level of intellectual processes in the speech act as well as at the level of affective-

emotional processes. The audition of an exposition or reading of a literary text, story or fairy-tale represents one of the modalities having direct effects upon the capacity of the focus of attention. Instability of attention at early ages is known as one of the main characteristics of an insufficient balance of cortical processes.

The passage from involuntary attention to voluntary attention but mainly the necessity to educate post voluntary attention needs to apply certain methods with maximum efficiency. The exercise the child has to conform to, namely the gradual focus of attention in relation to an object, to an action is applied with many difficulties, at early stages. The capacity of effort is reduced. Under these circumstances, the loud presentation of an emotional content, either through direct exposition or an artistic reading record, has the value of an affective system, which determines the orientation and focus of attention without difficulties.

The reading or exposition, under the most appropriate form, namely the tale, represents the intuitive linguistic support, the model in relation to which small children measure their own speech. The effort pre-schooler applies to memorize the things he hears, to reproduce the content of ideas in a requested form is an important way of verbal-logical accumulation. The substance of representations obtained through readings made by another person and the language heard in its specific structure in larger dimensions in communication offer pre-schoolers the construction material of their own speech (Crețu, 1999).

In order to check the efficiency of stories and fairy-tales in point of coherence and logical sequence of the content, of identifying characters, of using literary phrases and educational application of the content, teachers can carry out an experiment. To this purpose, we can use a few fairy-tales from the curriculum, very popular in the family and also in the kindergarten activities such as: The Daughter of the Old Woman and the Daughter of the Old Man by Ion Creangă, Cinderella by Grimm Brothers, Salt in Food by Petre Ispirescu, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs by Grimm Brothers.

Children will have to achieve the following tasks:

- To retain the characters in the fairy-tale;
- To render in a coherent, logical manner the content of the fairy-tale;
- To reproduce what they retained from the content, observing at the same time the differences, the manner in which they use a correct, coherent, pictorial speech;
- To create new tales starting from a free choice fragment from the tales they already know.

Through this experiment, we can check children's possibilities in relation to speech development and to the development of thinking operation such as: synthetic thinking and generalization. A special emphasis is laid upon the acquisition of educational values, as these contribute to children's education, to the forming of proper skills and to civilized behaviour. Through an intense activity, the teacher aims at forming an efficient development of mental capacities and also the social-educative attitude of children. With a view to achieve this important objective, the teacher will be preoccupied to find efficient procedures and modalities in order to improve the methodology of forming young generation ethically and aesthetically.

## 7. Conclusion

Story-retelling as an organized activity implies not only effort and personal exertion but also spontaneity and inventiveness in constructing and solving issues though various and diverse methods and

procedures. For the achievement of this activity one can use the fairy-tales The Swans, Hazel Whip, Salt in Food, Brave Prâslea and the Golden Apples. The objectives of the activity are:

- Reproduction of certain moments from known fairy-tales, stimulation of verbal flexibility and fidelity to the text;
- Perception of moral quality in the main and secondary types of characters; consolidation of the ability to form correct sentences; education of the observation spirit;
- Development of the capacity of cooperation within the group in order to achieve the task of the team.

The introduction of the activity can be achieved by presenting a few images from the respective tales. The update of the knowledge children has about the stories and tales they already know can be achieved by means of riddles familiar to them.

However simple tales may be, their content always is full of learning experiences. They emphasize the qualities of positive heroes and influence children's personality and their attitude in different circumstances.

Charles Perrault, speaking about the educational role of the fairy-tales he created with mastery, shows that the layer of mystery and charm of the fairy-tale help children to acquire the notions of the good and the bad gradually. The role and importance of fairy tales consists in their cognitive, ethical and aesthetic value and in the many-sided influence they exercise upon children's personality.

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